

The Globe



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Construction workers upgrade utilities at the southeast end of the Sungold Heights trailer park on Wednesday, May 19.

Tim Middagh / The Globe

BIG DIG IN SUNGOLD HEIGHTS

Infrastructure improvements now underway in 106-site community

By Julie Buntjer
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Worthington — The Sungold Heights mobile home park in Worthington is undergoing a \$2.57 million infrastructure rehabilitation project this year, funded largely by grants and deferred loans totaling \$2.3 million. The rehab work, which began last month, includes abandoning aging sewer and water infrastructure

on the park's west side and building new main and lateral lines to individual homes, milling existing and badly deteriorated pavement, and creating new bituminous streets in the 106-site community. All of the work is made possible as a result of the park's former owner opting to sell the property to park tenants. Northcountry Cooperative Foundation (NCF), a Minneapolis-based

nonprofit, worked with residents of Sungold Heights for two years on the process to form a cooperative and take ownership of the mobile home park, according to NCF's Victoria Clark. Ownership was transferred to the cooperative in June 2019, thanks to an upfront \$1 million commitment from Minnesota Housing to finance the rehab work. The remainder of the funds were secured in December 2020 through

the Manufactured Home Community Redevelopment program. **Taking pride in ownership** — The cooperative is now governed by a six-member board of directors comprised of park tenants. Mario Cornejo, a 15-year resident of Sungold Heights, serves as board president. He's thrilled work is finally being done in the community after years of asking the previous owner to

address maintenance issues. "For years it's been really, really bad and now we're getting stuff done in our community," shared Cornejo. "The residents in Sungold Heights are very pleased that this is taken care of." Cornejo said about 80% of the residents in the mobile home community had problems with water and sewer pipes constantly freezing during the winter. **SUNGOLD:** Page 2



Ryan McGaughey / The Globe
Land being developed as part of the Glenwood Heights Second Addition project is shown Friday, May 21, from the current terminus of Campbell Boulevard.

Grant helps Adrian to offer services for older residences

By Ryan McGaughey
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ADRIAN — The city of Adrian has received a grant through the Minnesota Area Agency on Aging that will help provide multiple services for community residents aged 60 and older. City Administrator Jill Wolf explained that the city recently received a Chore and Housekeeping Grant from the agency in the amount of \$25,000.

"The city applied for it and the grant was made possible through CARES Act funding that was given to the agency, and they granted it out to entities such as municipalities or

other non-profit organizations," Wolf said. "We will provide laundry, housekeeping and lawn care services." "When I say 'we,' the city doesn't actually provide it," she continued. "We have private contractors who do the work and then turn their bills into the city, and the city pays those contractors with the grant money." Wolf noted that the city has made an arrangement with Rock County Opportunities in Luverne, which has a laundry service that puts its clients to work. Adrian residents aged 60 and older are eligible for the program. **GRANT:** Page 7

City takes step to add 9 lots to upcoming housing development

By Ryan McGaughey
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WORTHINGTON — A change order extending Campbell Boulevard within the city's Glenwood Heights Addition while adding nine "move-up" lots to the neighborhood's upcoming home development project was approved Wednesday afternoon in a special Worthington City Council meeting. It's anticipated that 37 new lots will be available for home construction by mid-summer. The change order was introduced as a result of mitigation of a wetland area that previously

limited Campbell Boulevard's extension to approximately 450 feet north of Sutherland Drive. Further extension of Campbell Boulevard, Worthington Assistant City Administrator/Director of Economic Development Jason Brisson explained Wednesday, results in the nine additional lots. The change order to extend Campbell Boulevard and create the additional lots will cost \$246,241.40, plus additional estimated engineering fees of approximately \$45,000. Project engineers Bolton and Menk reviewed the additional **LOTS:** Page 6

How bout 'dem apples?



Tim Middagh / The Globe
Crabapples in full bloom are pictured west of Worthington in this photo taken last week. The weather will feel summer-like for the next few days, with high temperatures expected to be in the 80s through Tuesday.

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Worthington WEATHER brought to you by Avera Medical Group Worthington Regional Forecast Map

StormTRACKER

Jared Piepenburg, Jesse Rika, Chief Meteorologist John Wiesler, Lydia Blume, Andrew Whittier

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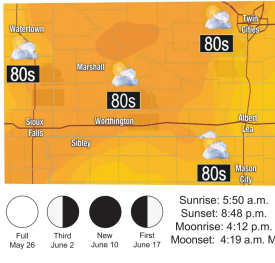
StormTRACKER Forecast

Warm this weekend, with highs in the 80s. Southerly winds through the weekend 10-20 mph. Staying near 80 early next week.

Worthington Airmax Temperature Through 6 pm Thursday	High	Low
Thursday	73°	63°
Sioux Falls Precipitation	In Inches	
Thursday	0	
Month To Date	1.06"	
Year To Date	7.46"	
Departure From Avg Year To Date	-0.92"	

Saturday	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
81/64 AM Clouds/PM Sun Wind: S 17 mph	81/66 Partly Cloudy Wind: S 13 mph	83/61 Mostly Cloudy Wind: SW 18 mph	81/55 Partly Cloudy Wind: W 17 mph	75/53 Mostly Sunny Wind: N 13 mph	67/55 Scattered Thunderstorms Wind: SE 17 mph	72/54 Isolated Thunderstorms Wind: S 14 mph

*Average wind speed for each day



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SUNGOLD

From Page 1

He hopes the new lines will alleviate a majority of those problems. "We have faith that it's going to change and get better for the future," he added.

Back in 2019, Cornejo said frost boils damaged many of the streets within the park. It was so bad that garbage haulers refused to enter Sungold Heights, forcing residents to wheel their garbage bins to the nearest adjacent street for service.

"We weren't happy about it because we pay our taxes," Cornejo said, adding that it went on for an entire year.

"A lot of people just left the trailer court because of all those issues," Cornejo shared.

When tenants learned the previous owner was looking to sell Sungold Heights, Cornejo said residents were worried about where they might find a different place to live — especially with Worthington's lack of available and affordable housing. That's when NCF

stepped in, as it assisted tenants through the process of forming a cooperative. Cornejo said the residents of Sungold Heights are content now, and anxious for their homes to become even better.

"The finishing of the road is the start of a better life," he said, adding that park residents want to improve the playground area for their children, renovate the storm shelter and possibly add a community center.

"We're talking about getting new homes, too," Cornejo said. "We have a lot of projects in mind. We want something better for our kids."

A triple win for Worthington

Sungold Heights is the first southwest Minnesota project NCF has assisted with, according to Clark. It's also the largest and most ethnically diverse of the mobile home communities with which the nonprofit has worked.

NCF is one of about a dozen nonprofit organizations across the county that uses the Resident Owned Communities (ROC)

model to assist in converting mobile home parks from private to cooperative ownership. Clark said NCF, which has completed nine Minnesota projects and three in Wisconsin since 2004, helped Sungold Heights residents establish governance and find ways to finance the rehabilitation work.

As that rehab work continues — it's slated to be completed in October — NCF will continue to support the cooperative through the life of the loan on the property. Clark said each tenant in the cooperative represents one vote, and the full membership makes all budgetary decisions, as well as capital improvement projects.

"The next phase of their improvement project is... assistance with home rehab and new home placement," Clark said. "They have a few vacant lots in the community and they'd like to bring in new homes. Some have also expressed rehab, and others have expressed wanting to bring in a newer home."



Photo courtesy Northcountry Cooperative Foundation
Sungold Heights board members and Northcountry Cooperative Foundation staff pose for a photo during a groundbreaking event April 16. They include Julie Martinez of NCF, Board President Mario Cornejo, Board Treasurer Jose Fuentes, Onsite Manager Lila Gonzalez, Operations Manager Salvador Gonzalez and At-Large Director Rodrigo Chavez.

"They have the control now and they have us to help them identify the resources," she added.

Clark called the Sungold Heights project a triple win. Not only are residents going to have new streets and working water and sewer lines, but the community also plans to partner with Highland Homes to bring in some new residences. That will keep jobs in Worthington and lead to improved housing

for the community. Ultimately, the value in helping Sungold Heights form a cooperative means that the manufactured home community can continue to provide much needed affordable housing in a community like Worthington.

"Manufactured housing can be a part of your affordable housing solution," she said. "There's a lot of stigma and historic animosity toward these communities. We don't see it that way. With investment, these can be vibrant places where people own their homes. It can be a pathway up for them instead of being a last resort."

"That's what the residents of Sungold Heights are doing," she added. "We want to be a vibrant asset to this community."

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